

VZCZCXRO3158
OO RUEHROV RUEHTRO
DE RUEHKH #1099/01 2720804
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 290804Z SEP 09 ZDK CTG NUMEROUS REQUESTS
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4480
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE
RUEHGG/UN SECURITY COUNCIL COLLECTIVE
RHMFISS/CJTJF HOA

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 001099

NSC FOR MGA VIN, LETIM
DEPT PLS PASS USAID FOR AFR/SUDAN
ADDIS ABABA ALSO FOR USAU

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [KPKO](#) [SOCI](#) [EAID](#) [SU](#)
SUBJECT: VOTER REGISTRATION FACING MANY CHALLENGES

REF: KHARTOUM 1098

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¶1. (SBU) SUMMARY: The National Election Commission (NEC) announced that voter registration will take place from November 1 to November ¶30. Many challenges face the NEC including inadequate logistical plans, staffing shortfalls, poor constituency delimitation, and the lack of a voter education program. Election advisors are pessimistic about the capacity of the NEC to successfully conduct voter registration. END SUMMARY.

PLAN ANNOUNCED, BUT ACTION NEEDED

¶2. (U) The NEC announced its final voter registration plan on September 25. Registration will take place from November 1 to November 30. Registration will be followed by a complaints period with the final voter list scheduled to be published at the beginning of January, 2010.

¶3. (SBU) In a meeting with poloff on September 25, International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) Election Advisor Jerome Leyraud, stated that the NEC adopted several important proposals to meet the NEC goal of registering 80 percent of the eligible voter population, approximately 16.8 million people. NEC agreed not to computerize its voter list, which posed significant logistical challenges, and agreed to a realistic number of voter registration staff. While Leyraud assessed the plan as "feasible", he stated it must translate into concrete solutions to registration problems. According to Leyraud, "An inclusive and transparent registration is unlikely to happen. The NEC is technically ill-prepared and the one-month countrywide registration is too optimistic."

NO CONCRETE LOGISTICS IN PLACE

¶3. (SBU) Leyraud indicated that a number of basic aspects of the voter registration plan remain unaddressed, including logistical plans for transporting voter registration materials. In a meeting with poloff on September 24, international election advisors said they fear that even a well thought out voter registration plan may not translate into manageable plans on the ground.

NEC LACKS STAFF

¶4. (SBU) According to Leyraud and Ray Kennedy, UNMIS Chief Electoral Affairs Officer, NEC has not yet begun recruitment of the approximately 10,821 registration staff, though staff training is

scheduled to begin in a week. In addition, the voter registration training manual has yet to be finalized and printed.

CONSTITUENCY DELIMITATION POOR

15. (SBU) Constituency delimitation will be a major challenge to registration according to Lisa Handley, a constituency delimitation expert. Handley stated that the lack of detailed delimitation will leave voters, State Election High Committees and the NEC thoroughly confused (reftel). According to Handley, constituencies have been poorly defined and have unclear boundaries. This will likely result in confusion of registration officials and voters regarding who is eligible to register in which registration center. Furthermore, some settled areas, for example in Darfur, were not assigned to constituencies, increasing the likelihood of disenfranchisement of voters if not addressed.

VOTER EDUCATION PROGRAM DELAYED

16. (SBU) Kennedy and Leyraud indicated that a major voter education campaign is only in the planning stages. In the short time remaining before November 1, it is imperative for the NEC and State Election High Committees to inform voters about the registration process, the election process and the registration locations.

17. (SBU) COMMENT: The NEC has many challenges to overcome to assure successful voter registration. In light of the problems inherent in the process as announced, the process may break down, and if so, the NEC may be forced to revert to unorthodox registration methods, such as relying on the NCP/state apparatus to mobilize resources in the North, as it did in the 2003 election. Any failure of the voter

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registration process is likely to foreshadow the NEC's incapacity to prepare for and conducting polling. END COMMENT.

ASQUINO